

HISTORIC CONNECTION

A newsletter of the city of Las Vegas Department of Planning. The Historic Preservation Commission is dedicated to saving the city's legacy and heritage.

Remembering Mr. Wright

It is hard to believe, but it has been 10 years since the Las Vegas community lost Frank Wright. He left too soon, a year after his retirement as curator of history at the Nevada State Museum after a two year battle with cancer.

His trademark drooping mustache and wry smile were familiar to many, as Frank was the "go to" guy for television and newspaper reporters wanting to make sure their history pieces were accurate.

Frank was one of the founding members and first chair of the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission. He helped shape its early years as the commission evolved toward achieving Certified Local Government status and hiring professional preservation staff.

Las Vegas history was not his first choice of careers, but as he liked to say, it chose him. He was originally a political scientist with a specialty in Middle East studies. Frank taught several years at UNLV, then left to work on his Ph.D. Returning to Las Vegas, he eventually joined the staff of the Nevada State Museum in Lorenzi Park.

At the museum he began by producing educational materials for seventh grade students on topics such as Clark and Washoe County histories, mining, explorers and Native Americans. After a few years he shifted into programming for adult audiences, researching and planning special exhibits, and beginning a long-running radio series, *Nevada Yesterdays*, on KNPR.

Although Frank didn't have a degree in Nevada history, he came to know it, especially Las Vegas history, as well or better than most

Nevada historians. He learned by helping people. In addition to his own work, he was often called upon by patrons to help with their research. Rather than just steering them to sources, he often stayed late or came in on Saturday to find the answers.

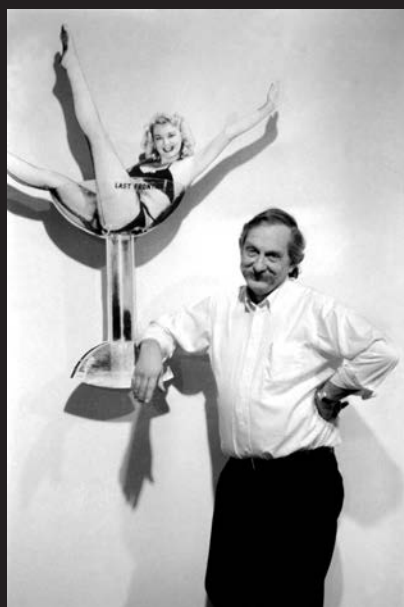
Another way he immersed himself in history was by teaching it. For decades he taught at least one class, sometimes two, at the College of Southern Nevada, in the evenings. He always said he learned a lot from his students, as he guided them in their research papers.

Frank gave to the community in so many ways. Every year during National Historic Preservation week he led free tours of the Las Vegas High School neighborhood. He volunteered to teach Las Vegas history to the annual Chamber of Commerce Leadership participants. And the countless lunches at the Rotary and Lions Clubs were his payment for regaling them with little-known Las Vegas history anecdotes.

Several important Las Vegas institutions have benefited by Frank's knowledge and generosity in sharing it. Besides the Historic Preservation Commission, he served as a founding member of the Springs Preserve, and an early member of the Neon Museum

and advisor to the Mob Museum.

Before Frank died he was working on a book version of his *Nevada Yesterdays* pieces. It was completed after his death by his wife Dorothy, A.D. Hopkins and David Millman, and published by Stephens Press. Frank would have enjoyed taking his book on the road and sharing it with the Las Vegas community. HC



Frank Wright (photo courtesy Ginger Bruner)

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Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month



Visitors from the Palm Springs Modern Committee enjoying the Pathways to Progress Tour

Thank you to everyone who made the 2013 Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month a HUGE success! We had tremendous participation from local museums with free days, free programming and events. The HPC and Nevada Humanities partnered to host the sold out **Pathways to Progress** bus tour led by historian and Clark County Museum Director Mark Hall-Patton. Afterwards attendees were treated to a lunchtime lecture at the Historic El Cortez Hotel and Casino about the history of the El Cortez by historian Peter Moruzzi and a **Then and Now** slide presentation of Las Vegas mid-century motels from roadside historian Jerry Stefani.

Thank you again to the Las Vegas Cadillac and LaSalle Club for providing vintage and antique vehicles for the Helderado Parade. This group of passionate car owners chauffeur our commissioners in style year after year.

2013 HPC Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation



2013 HPC Award Ceremony at City Council

Please join the HPC in congratulating the following individuals and organizations on receiving the annual HPC award (listed in alphabetical order)!

- Lisa Gioia-Acres for the **Images of America: Showgirls of Las Vegas** book.
- El Cortez hotel-casino for their leadership, initiative and commitment to the preservation of Fremont Street's iconic history through the designation of the El Cortez on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Patricia Hershwitzky for the **Images of America: West Las Vegas** book.
- Richard Hooker, for his years of dedicated service and leadership in promoting historic preservation and the arts for the education and enjoyment of all citizens.
- Linda Miller for the **Images of America: Early Las Vegas** book.
- David Millman, for his years of dedicated service and leadership in preserving Nevada's history, countless volunteer hours serving on the Historic Preservation Commission and his commitment to historical accuracy for the education of all citizens.
- Neon Museum for the historic rehabilitation of the Historic La Concha lobby, and the addition for staff offices and meeting space.
- Gerald Shear of 1300 Birch St. for the historic rehabilitation of his Mid-Century Modern home.
- Joseph Watson, artist, for the design of the Berkley Square Historic District banners.
- Brenda Williams and the Historic Westside School Alumni Foundation for the **Westside School Alumni Stories: Our School, Our Community, Our Time**, book.

The public is encouraged to nominate awardees for the 2014 awards. The deadline is Jan. 31, 2014. Please visit www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hp for award categories.

2014 Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month

2014 will be even more exciting as we partner with the Nevada Sesquicentennial celebration to bring you several events that celebrate the history of our great city and state.

Nevada became the 36th state to enter the union of the United States of America on Oct. 31, 1864. The state is planning a massive celebration of the 150th anniversary of statehood with events that share the history, culture and future with all who cherish our state. To fund events throughout the state, Nevada has released the 150th license plates, available now at your local DMV. For more information, please visit www.nevada150.org.

Stay tuned to www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hp for updates on events and how you can help.



Nevada Sesquicentennial License Plate

Harrison Boarding House

The Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce is planning to rehabilitate 1001 F St. with a goal to become a state-of-the-art, net-zero energy, LEED-certified model demonstration home as well as a cultural and community resource center in Historic West Las Vegas. The home was originally constructed by Mrs. Geneva Harrison in 1942. During the 1940s and 1950s, Mrs. Harrison provided room and board for African American entertainers who were not allowed to lodge, mingle, gamble or dine in the Strip hotels they were performing at. Many famous entertainers stayed at the Harrison House, including Sammy Davis Jr., Jack Benny's sidekick Eddie (Rochester) Anderson, singer Bob Parrish, nightclub entertainers and Flamingo headliners the Edwards Sisters, the Jubilaires, and musician/singer Arthur Lee Simpkins.

The rehabilitation is being directed by Rick Van Diepen, executive director of Green Chips, a non-profit collaborative organization that builds community through partnerships for a sustainable future. For more information on the Harrison House project, e-mail harrisonhouselasvegas@gmail.com. HC

HP Update:

2012 Mayor's Urban Design Awards

The city of Las Vegas is accepting nominations for the 2013 Mayor's Urban Design Awards (MUDA). MUDA awards celebrate projects that foster the city's commitment to historic preservation, sustainability and livability in one of four categories: 1) Buildings and Their Environs, 2) Public Places, 3) Public Art, and 4) Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse.

Nomination forms are available at the front counter at the Development Services Center located at 333 N. Rancho Drive or online at www.lasvegasnevada.gov/muda. Anyone is invited to nominate projects; however, the project must be located within city limits and be completed by Dec. 31, 2013 to qualify. The awards will be presented at the State of the City Address on Jan. 9, 2014 by Mayor Carolyn G. Goodman.

Historic Preservation Commission Centennial Legacy Grant

The deadline for submitting an application for the HPC Centennial Legacy Grant is March 1, 2014. Grants are limited to \$5,000 and are for historic preservation projects within the city of Las Vegas boundaries. Past grant projects include lectures, educational materials and historical architecture tours. For more information and to download an application, please visit www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hp.

City Of Las Vegas Centennial Grant

Grants are for historic preservation projects within the city of Las Vegas boundaries, and are limited to \$100,000. Past grant projects include historic preservation events, lectures, educational materials and historic property restoration and rehabilitation. For more information, please contact Shari Farkas at (702) 229-2397, or sfarkas@lasvegasnevada.gov.

Phase III: Beverly Green Neighborhood Historic Survey Is Complete

The city of Las Vegas has recently completed the final phase of historic resource surveys for the Beverly Green Neighborhood near St. Louis Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard. The survey, funded by the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant, built upon two previous surveys of the Beverly Green neighborhood.



Beverly Green Home

The survey found the Paradise Park tract, in addition with the previously surveyed Paradise Village tract, to be eligible for historic district designation on the National and local Register of Historic Places. The city of Las Vegas will work with the Beverly Green Neighborhood Association and property owners to determine the level of interest in historic designation. Beverly Green neighborhood meetings are posted on the Beverly Green Neighborhood Facebook page, and meetings attended by the city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Officer will be posted on the city of Las Vegas Department of Planning website at www.lasvegasnevada.gov/Government/planning.htm. The complete report is available on the city's historic preservation website at www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hp.

The HPF originates with the National Park Service and is administered by the SHPO to assist with inventories of historic properties throughout the state. The city of Las Vegas is a certified local government which allows for priority status for HPF grant applications. The city is typically awarded approximately \$30,000 - \$40,000 annually to survey historic neighborhoods. For 2013 the city will be surveying a portion of the Huntridge Neighborhood near Maryland Parkway and Charleston Boulevard.

Survey of these areas is part of the recommendation by the city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission to develop a Mid-Century Architecture Historic Context Report for World War II and post-World War II development within the city of Las Vegas. HC

Upcoming Events:

2013 National Preservation Conference

Oct. 29 - Nov. 2, 2013

Preservation at the Crossroads is sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, visit www.preservationnation.org. HC

Biography Corner:

Historic Preservation Commissioner Richard Serfas

Please join the HPC in welcoming Commissioner Richard Serfas (Category 2 – Experienced in Urban Design or Planning) to the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission. You might say Commissioner Serfas was born to



HPC Commissioner Richard Serfas

serve on this commission. He was born in Reading, Pa, a town that was established in 1748 in the vicinity of such historic heavies as Philadelphia, Gettysburg, Valley Forge and Lancaster, Pa. Serfas' boyhood home was a World War I era three-story brownstone that faced a park that was developed in the 1700s. Serfas recalls, "History was part of the local culture and being knowledgeable about it was a competitive thing in school much like sports."

Serfas attributes his time as a Boy Scout with nurturing the love of history he has today. His scout troop went hiking and camping at many of the historical parks and landmarks in Pennsylvania where they would often find a bullet from the battle of Gettysburg. Upon graduating from high school, Serfas pursued a Liberal Arts degree at Jacksonville University where his art history professors got him interested in architecture from a historical perspective.

Commissioner Serfas went on to earn a master's degree in real estate development from Columbia University in New York, a master's degree in public administration and urban and regional planning from Pennsylvania State University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Colorado State University. Serfas came to Nevada in 1978 and served as assistant director of the Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning from 1989 to 1994. From 1996 to 1999 Serfas was project manager of Focus 2000/Marnell Corrao Associates. Commissioner Serfas is currently vice president of commercial planning and design for American Nevada Co., a company that specializes

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Threatened

"Editor's note: This section of the newsletter features significant restoration projects, preservation successes and threatened resources but not necessarily one of each in every issue."

by Mary-Margaret Sullivan-Stratton, author of *Mondo Vegas: Touring Mid Century Modern Las Vegas* and *How Modern Was My Valley: Touring Post War San Fernando Valley*.

Threatened: The Gables Motel

The Gables at 1301 Fremont St. is one of several pre- and post war motels that dot lower Fremont Street, part of the historic Boulder Highway. These wonderful, classic motels give us insight back to the days when the only way to get to downtown Las Vegas from Boulder City (and from Arizona) was via Boulder Highway and up to Fremont Street.

Sadly, many of these classic motels have either been demolished or are in imminent danger of demolition. The Gables, with its signature gabled roofline, original unpainted brick exterior, courtyard, vaulted porte cochere and fabulous intact neon and backlit plastic sign, is unique even among the remaining mid-century motels. The Gables is truly worthy of preservation on a local, statewide and national level.

The Gables is one of the last and best historic examples of the way Americans use to travel. With its high level of



The Gables Motel sign, 1301 Fremont St. (photo courtesy MM Stratton)

architectural integrity, it would probably qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, opening up opportunities for historic rehabilitation grants and tax incentives.

The property recently changed hands and is closed and surrounded by a chain link fence. A health and community-oriented project proposal has been created by concerned citizens, Kerry Clasby and Mary-Margaret Stratton that proposes an ideal adaptive reuse for this historic structure. For the complete article and more images, please visit www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hp. HC



The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member board made up of community members appointed by the Las Vegas City Council. The board is responsible for hearing and making recommendations regarding the designation of historic landmarks, properties and districts to the city's historic register; overseeing alterations and new construction of designated historic properties and making recommendations to the City Council. Meetings: Fourth Wednesday of each month, 12:15 p.m., City Hall, City Clerk's Conference Room, 495 S. Main St., Las Vegas, NV 89101 except in November and December when they are often combined.

Dorothy Wright, chairperson

Bob Stoldal, vice-chairperson

Mary Hausch

Patrick J. Klenk

Robert Bellis

Claytee White

Jarmilla McMillan-Arnold

Jack LeVine

Colleen Beck

Donald Hotchkiss, Jr., P.E.

Richard Serfas

David Millman, ex-officio

For more information about historic preservation efforts, contact:
Courtney Mooney – Historic Preservation Officer
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Nevada 89106
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Historic Preservation Commissioner Richard Serfas – continued from page 3

in the design and development of master-planned communities and commercial properties.

Commissioner Serfas has been an advocate of historic preservation throughout his planning career in the public and private sectors. Many of the projects he has worked on has involved redevelopment of blighted areas with historical significance. His redevelopment strategies often included adaptive reuse of buildings and sites within the envelope of historic preservation.

We are very happy to have Mr. Serfas on the HPC! HC

Kudos:



The Mob Museum



The Historic La Concha Motel Lobby at the Neon Museum (photo courtesy <http://fashionpluslifestyle.wordpress.com>)

Congratulations to The Mob Museum, Neon Museum and the city of Las Vegas for winning two American Public Works Association awards in 2013. The Mob Museum was named the APWA National Public Works Project of the Year for Historic Preservation, and The Neon Museum and Boneyard Park have received the APWA 2013 Project of the Year award for structures under five million dollars. HC